

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE A1

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## North 'Foot Soldier' Describes Carrying Cash, Data to Contras

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Robert W. Owen, a self-described "foot soldier" in the administration's secret war against Nicaragua, testified yesterday that at the direction of Lt. Col. Oliver L. North he delivered envelopes stuffed with cash, advice on arms purchases and U.S. intelligence maps and photographs to contra leaders.

Owen, who testified before the Senate and House Iran-contra committees under a grant of immunity, described several payments to rebel leaders during a period when U.S. aid to the contras was banned. In describing one of the transactions, Owen implicated White House administrative aide Johnathan Miller, who abruptly resigned his job within an hour after being publicly identified.

Miller, the manager of White House administrative operations since June 1986, was either working for the State Department or temporarily assigned to the National Security Council (NSC) staff in March 1985 when, according to Owen's testimony, he helped convert traveler's checks into cash for a payment to a contra leader sources identified as Arturo Cruz.

Owen testified that North, who was fired from his NSC post last November, typically handed him traveler's checks taken from a safe in the Old Executive Office Building located next to the White House. Owen said his job was to convert the checks to cash and then

give the money to contra leaders designated by North. In one instance involving a payment of \$6,000 or \$7,000, Owen said, he was so rushed "there were probably too many checks for me to cash," so Miller's aid was enlisted.

"I think he may have done \$3,000 and I did \$4,000 or we both did \$3,500, or \$3,000 and \$3,000," Owen said.

Miller is the first administration official to resign since the congressional hearings on the Iran-contra affair opened May 5. White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said the White House was informed by investigators Tuesday that Miller would be implicated in public testimony and Miller was advised to hire a lawyer. Miller gave no specific reason for his resignation.

"It's a matter for him and the [congressional] committee to sort out. I make no judgments," Fitzwater said.

Owen described another occasion, possibly in April 1985, in which he "met outside the Old Executive Office Building and handed over an envelope to another

[contra] Indian leader who was in town, and needed some assistance to help with his food bills and hotel bill, and to just stay alive."

Last week, the committees' first witness, retired Air Force major general Richard V. Secord, North's chief assistant in both the contra operation and the secret arms sales to Iran, described how North put together the network that channeled money to the contras after U.S. aid was banned by Congress in October 1984.

Yesterday, Owen provided rich new details about North's management of the secret war and the movement of money in the months before profits from the Iranian arms sales were diverted to the contras.

Owen told the committees that the traveler's checks North gave him came from contra leader Adolfo Calero, who had access to \$32 million that Saudi Arabia gave to the contras between July 1984 and March 1985. Calero, who had a difficult relationship with other contra leaders, sent money to North, who redistributed it to other rebel officials.

Owen said he first met North in 1983. At the time he was working for Sen. Dan Quayle (R-Ind.), but he continued his association with North when he later went to work for Gray & Co., a politically well-connected public relations firm.

While a volunteer at the 1984 Republican National Convention in Dallas, Owen said he sat in on several meetings on contra military and fund-raising needs attended by Calero, North and retired major general John K. Singlaub, another key North associate in the private contra network.

Owen left his job at Gray and Co. in November 1984 and signed on with Calero at \$2,500 a month plus expenses.

Owen, who shuttled between Washington and Central America, said he went by the code name "The Courier." Calero, he said, was called "The Sparkplug," and North occasionally used the code name "Steelhammer."

Owen said he believes North obtained the U.S. intelligence maps and photos he delivered to Calero from either the Central Intelligence Agency or the Pentagon. He said that North on different occasions

said the material came from "the people across the river," a reference to the Pentagon, or "the people up the river," meaning the CIA.

Owen said that in late spring 1985 he helped in the exchange of information for a \$5 million arms deal Singlaub arranged for the contras. Owen said he flew to Colorado to go over a list of contra weapons needs with Singlaub and then traveled to San Francisco, where he went over the same list with Calero. Owen said he also relayed information to North from Calero about the purchase.

Owen, who also served as North's emissary to Miskito and other Nicaraguan Indian groups opposing the Sandinistas, said that the same spring he made a cash payment to one Indian leader while the man was negotiating with the Sandinistas. Sources identified the leader as Brooklyn Rivera. "The feeling was that if he went to his negotiations with the Sandinistas and he walked out of them . . . we would try and help him," said Owen. He added that the payment was made while both sat in a parked car here.

It was disclosed earlier that during 1986 North arranged a \$7,000 monthly stipend for Cruz, a former contra leader who was considered crucial to winning congressional support for the rebels.

Cruz had earlier received money directly from the U.S. government. In March 1985, administration officials decided he no longer could receive direct U.S. payments and agreed to arrange private assistance for him, Owen testified, without naming Cruz.

Later, Cruz, Calero and Alfonso Robelo, another top contra leader, played a key role in getting the State Department to hire Owen as a consultant to help oversee \$27 million in nonlethal aid provided to the contras in late 1985 and part of 1986.

Staff writer David Hoffman contributed to this report.